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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000072

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: DPR VICE CHAIRMAN RECALLED BY HIS OWN PARTY

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Classified By: Classified By: Political Officer Eric W. Kneedler, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) On January 8 the Reform Star Party (PBR) exercised its right to recall member Zaenal Ma'arif from the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR). Zaenal, who served as the Vice Chairman of the DPR, had systematically aggravated the PBR party leadership by neglecting his constituents in north Sumatra, skimming party funds, and shining an unwelcome spotlight on the party by taking a second wife. After failing in their initial attempt to simply remove Zaenal from his high profile post as DPR Vice Chairman, PBR leaders later determined they had no alternative but to recall Zaenal from the DPR entirely. Zaenal's removal from the DPR opened up a highly coveted Vice Chairmanship slot and immediately triggered a hotly contested race among the political parties to fill the plum post. End Summary.

PBR SAYS ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

¶2. (C) On January 8 the PBR formally pulled the plug on Zaenal Ma'arif's tenure in the DPR after efforts to call the renegade parliamentarian to heel had proven fruitless (Note: In the Indonesian legislative system, political parties have the power to remove party members from the DPR at the party's discretion. End Note). According to Ade Nasution, a PBR parliamentarian, Zaenal had rankled PBR leadership first by ignoring his constituents in northern Sumatra and then by pointedly refusing to take steps to address the problem. Compounding matters, Zaenal showed little interest in advancing party goals in the DPR, refused to take phone calls from party leaders, and according to media reports, repeatedly missed scheduled meetings with his party colleagues.

¶3. (C) Ade Nasution told us the PBR's problems with Zaenal did not end with his public displays of impertinence or even his apparent contempt for party prerogatives. Zaenal was also reportedly well known for redirecting party funds into his own coffers. According to Nasution, during the PBR's 2004 party congress Zaenal squirreled away 2.5 billion rupiah (\$277,000) from the PBR campaign budget for his own use. Nasution told us that even though many in the party were well aware of this outright theft, the party declined to pursue

the matter out of concern the incident would attract unfavorable publicity.

¶4. (C) Media accounts of the recall have highlighted polygamy as a determining factor in the party's decision to oust Zaenal. The truth, according to Nasution, was that Zaenal's decision to take a second wife was of secondary importance to party calculations regarding his fate. Though party leaders felt Zaenal's public trumpeting of a second wife did not necessarily reflect well on the party, as a matter of policy, the Reform Star Party recognized the legality of polygamy. Polygamy was not a determining factor in his dismissal, but it certainly did not help Zaenal's cause with the party.

¶5. (C) Nasution told us that despite his egregious misconduct and poor judgment, Zaenal did not seal his fate with the party until he told reporters a few weeks ago that he would consider forming his own party if the PBR sought to recall him. According to Nasution, it was this final display of disloyalty that ultimately cost him his job.

DPR LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

¶6. (C) Zaenal's dismissal created an immediate vacancy in one of the DPR's three Vice Chairmanship positions. The other two DPR Vice Chairman -- Soetardjo Soegoeritno and Muhaimin Iskandar -- were from the Indonesian Democratic Party - Struggle (PDI-P) and the National Awakening Party (PKB), the second and fifth largest factions in the DPR respectively. The PBR, on the other hand, held just two percent of the seats in the DPR and was only the eighth largest party in parliament, having secured its Vice Chairmanship almost entirely on the strength its alliance with Golkar, the DPR's largest party.

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¶7. (C) In the coming days the lobbying and political horse trading for the open Vice Chairman position will reach a fever pitch. Despite relinquishing the position voluntarily, the Reform Star Party does not figure to be a major player in the negotiations to find a new Vice Chairman, and in all likelihood will not be given a second opportunity to fill the slot. Speculation surrounding the vacant Vice Chairmanship has thus far focused largely on SBY's Democratic Party, the DPR's fourth largest party and an underrepresented presence in the DPR's leadership ranks.
PASCOE